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AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

Please replace the claims with the claims provided in the listing below wherein status, amendments, additions and cancellations are indicated.

1. (Previously Presented) A connecting structure for piping members, comprising:

a first piping member having a channel therein, the first piping member having at least one first joint surface which includes at least one first opening in communication with said channel, said at least one first joint surface further including a first annular groove therein;

a second piping member having a channel therein, the second piping member having at least one second joint surface which includes at least one second opening in communication with said channel, said at least one second joint surface further including a second annular groove therein; and

a sleeve including a partition and inserting sections which are radially thinner than said partition and which are disposed on either side of said partition, said inserting sections including flanges on both ends thereof between which at least one elastic body is fitted such that said inserting sections each is press insertable into a respective one of said first and second annular grooves.

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2. (Original) A connecting structure for piping members according to claim 1, wherein the first and second piping members are connected together by connecting members for connecting the first and second joint surfaces together or a connecting member for connecting upper or undersides of the first and second piping members.

3. (Original) A connecting structure for piping members according to claim 1, wherein joint fitting portions are formed in the first and second joint surfaces of the first and second piping members respectively and the members are connected through joints fixed into the fitting portions with pins.

4. (Previously Presented) A connecting structure for piping members according to any one of claims 1 to 3, wherein at least one of the first piping member or the second piping member is at least one of a valve, fitting, mixer, pump, flowmeter, or various types of sensors.

5. (Previously Presented) A connecting structure for piping members, comprising:

a first piping member including a first joint surface and a second piping member including a second joint surface, said first and second joint surfaces facing

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one another when the first and second piping members are mutually connected, the first piping member including a first channel extending therethrough, the first joint surface including a first recess communicative with said channel and a first annular groove defined by a first radially inward wall and a first radially outward wall, and the second piping member including a second channel extending therethrough, the second joint surface including a second recess communicative with said channel and a second annular groove defined by a second radially inward wall and a second radially outward wall; and

a sleeve comprised of a pair of inserting sections and a partition being disposed therebetween, said partition including a through hole, said inserting sections including flanges at respective ends thereof for accommodating and retaining at least one elastic body therebetween, each of said inserting sections being configured for reception in a respective one of said first and second annular grooves.

6. (Previously Presented) A connecting structure for piping members according to claim 5, wherein:

the at least one elastic body includes two elastic bodies; and

said partition and said flanges collectively define a pair of grooves therebetween for accommodating the two elastic bodies.

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7. (Previously Presented) A connecting structure for piping members according to claim 6, wherein outer diameters of the flanges and the partition approximate a corresponding diameter of each of said first and second radially outward walls.

8. (Previously Presented) A connecting structure for piping members according to claim 5, wherein:

the at least one elastic body is a single elastic body; and

said flanges collectively define a groove therebetween for accommodating the single elastic body.

9. (Previously Presented) A connecting structure for piping members according to claim 8, wherein outer diameters of the flanges approximate a corresponding diameter of each of said first and second radially outward walls.

10. (Previously Presented) A connecting structure for piping members according to claim 5, wherein said through hole in said partition includes a bore which approximates a corresponding bore of each of said first and second channels.

11. (Cancelled)

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12. (Previously Presented) A connecting structure for piping members according to claim 5, wherein a length between end surfaces of said sleeve is approximately equal to combined depths from the first joint surface to a bottom of said first annular groove and from the second joint surface to a bottom of said second annular groove.

13. (Currently amended) A connecting structure for piping members according to claim 12, wherein said partition is accommodated in said first and second recesses when the [[the]] first and second piping members are mutually connected.

14. (Previously Presented) A connecting structure for piping members according to claim 13, wherein a width of said partition is approximately equal to combined depths from the first joint surface to a bottom of said first recess and from the second joint surface to a bottom of said second recess, thereby allowing said first and second joint surfaces to be brought into confronting engagement when the first and second piping members are mutually connected.